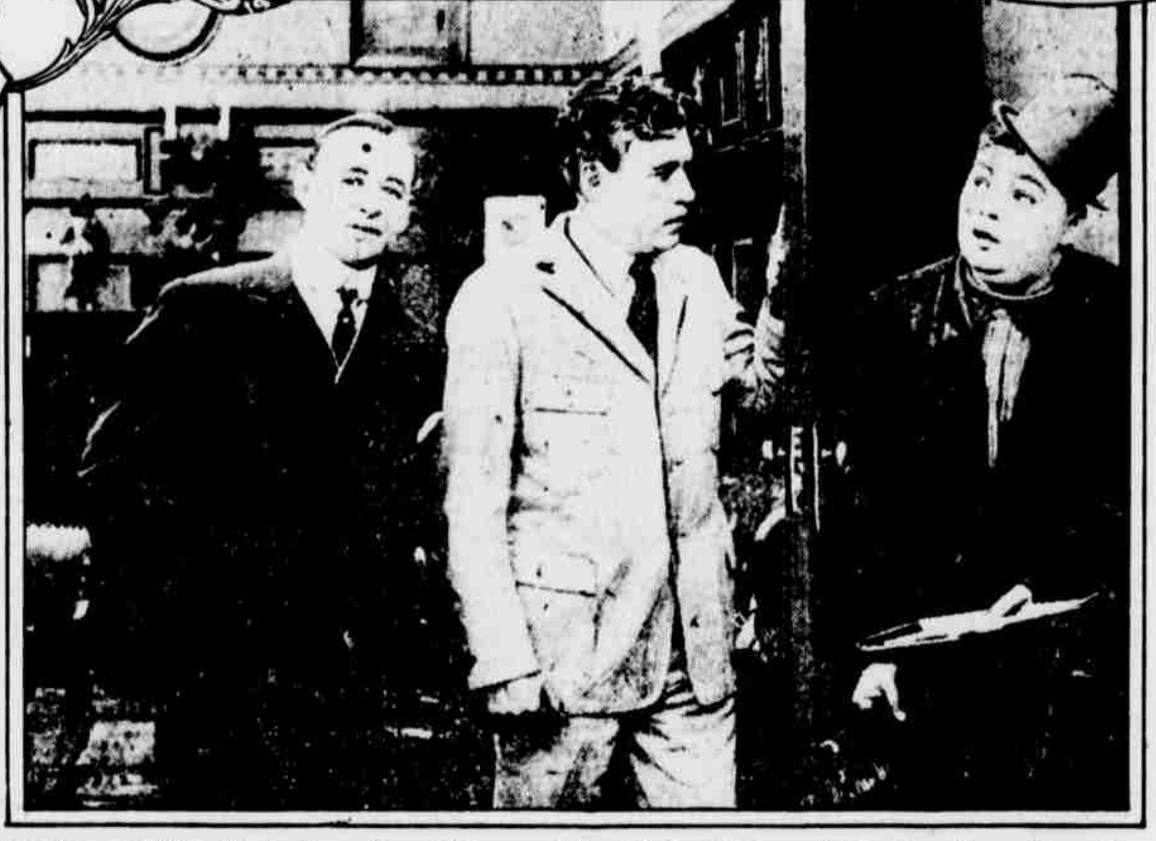
BUILDING THE FABRIC OF A LAUGH IS THE HARDEST OF WORK

Raymond Hitchcock, Roscoe Arbuckle and Flora Zabelle in "The Village Scandal."

"The Snow Cure"—real snow and a real bear.

The Hitchcock wink.

Lew Fields again abuses Joe Weber in spite of Alice Davenport's protests.



William Collier, Mack Sennett and Roscoe Arbuckle in "Fatty and the Broadway Stars."

So Says King of Cinema Funmakers as He Pauses in Midst of Strenuous Day's Work to Tell How Film Comedies Are Made

"HUNDREDS of thousands of people all over the world daily laugh at moving picture comedies," said Mack Sennett, king of the film funmakers, "but how many ever pause to think of the brains and work that go into the making of one laugh?"

It would be a revelation to those who never have considered the source of their fun to watch the maker of the Triangle-Keystone comedies in action. Derby down almost to his eyes, shirtsleeves rolled above his elbows and perspiration pouring from his face he rushes about the studio, the personification of dynamic, untiring energy. At his side there is always a stenographer to whom he is saying repeatedly, "Make a note of this, make a note of that; I want to change it." His brow is gnarled in concentration as he shouts orders.

"Don't make that expression of dismay quite so pronounced, Miss Normand," or "Exaggerate that gesture of mock deference a little more, please, Mr. Arbuckle." In short, he handles his company as a musician does his notes, blending their actions into what on the screen will be a symphony of laughter.

"Comedy," the miracle man of merriment told the writer between the rehearsal of two scenes, "is the hardest thing in the world to 'get over' successfully and film laugh plays are twice as hard to make as those of the stage. In the first place, the movie director is handicapped because it is impossible for him to use two of the great elements of comedy upon which the stage director largely depends—the voice of his players and the funny lines. What use would Harry Lauder's infectious laugh or Oscar Wilde's brilliant epigrams be to me? I have to juggle with action where the playwright juggles with words. Then to make a comedy successful you must have a climax every minute. I always must be building up, making each climax funnier than the last and the last the funniest of all. If a film play is too funny at the beginning it kills the latter part.

"There are three things that make a picture comedy successful. About one-half depends upon the scenario. I write all my own scenarios, because I find it almost impossible to buy good ones. The man who can write one comic scenario a week for me that is up to the Keystone standard can make out his own checks. The rest depends upon the actors and the director. The director's part is the selection of the proper cast—and that is very important—the working out with infinite care of the proper details regarding scenery, costumes and action and the handling of each scene so that when it is shown it will appear that every turn of the actor's hand, every widening or narrowing of his eyes, every breath he draws, is absolutely spontaneous.

"From the point of view of the actor, too," continued the creator of canned mirth as he warmed to the subject that fills his every thought, "comedy is the hardest kind of acting to do well. To begin with, the comedian has to ring the bell every time. Either he makes his audience laugh or he falls flat. A serious picture play done only indifferently well may 'get by,' but there is no such thing as halfway success for the movie comedian.

"And let me take this opportunity to say right here to those people who are forever referring contemptuously to 'slap stick' comedy, that to do so-called 'low comedy' successfully is, in my opinion, the highest accomplishment possible to the histrionic artist.

"Burlesque is taking a serious character and tipping the scales of his actions just enough to make him appear laughable, dropping him by an exaggerated gesture or a facial expression from the sublime to the ridiculous. To burlesque a character the actor must first be able to play that part 'straight' before he can attempt a travesty on it. Before a man can 'kid' with notes and chords he must be a good musician. To turn out good satire a writer first must be able to write serious stuff. That's just the way it is with the actor who tries burlesque.

"One of the attributes that a film comedian needs particularly is courage. He must be an acrobat or at least an athlete. Any man who can be a successful comedian on the screen would be sure to succeed on the stage, but the rule does not necessarily work the other way. The film comedian dare not depend too much on a humorous makeup or queer clothes. If he appears on the screen wearing ludicrous costumes it is just as if he wore on his shirt front a placard reading, 'I'm funny. Watch me.' If he fails to live up to his clothes the Lord help him! He must get a laugh with every gesture, must back up those clothes or he goes flat and the audience begins to ask, 'Who is this guy trying to act funny, anyway? He's painful.' For that reason I don't like to rely on funny makeups. I'd rather have an actor who can be funny in a dress suit.

"Several actors have made great reputations as comedians simply because they were unusual specimens of humanity, because they were remarkably fat or remarkably tall, because they had some very pronounced peculiarity of features or because of great ability as facial contortionists. These men are born and cannot be made.

"Many of our future star comedians of the silent drama will be recruited from the Europeans, I believe. Continentals are by nature very expressive. They talk with their arms, eyes and whole faces. This is true especially of the members of the volatile Latin races, who cannot mention a spade without making a gesture as if they were about to dig a hole, cannot keep the sparkle out of their eyes when they tell a joke.

"The screen has many advantages over the stage," said Mr. Sennett, his active mind skipping to another phase of the many sided subject he loves to discuss from any angle. "For one thing, on a ten by fifteen foot moving picture screen it is possible for every person in the theatre to see the expression of an actor's face more clearly than it can be seen by those sitting in the back of a regular playhouse.

"In a close up picture you can show all the minutest details, the quiver of an actor's eyelash or the faintest curl of his lip. Look at this picture of Raymond Hitchcock and the dancer, for example. In the film a close up picture of Mr. Hitchcock's face is shown. He turns slowly toward the audience—and winks! It brought a roar of laughter everywhere the film was shown. Just a wink! But every movie fan in the house could see his eyelash move and catch the expression in his eye as clearly as if Mr. Hitchcock was sitting in a chair beside him. You could not get that effect to the gallery gods, or even to the people in the back orchestra chairs, if Hitchcock himself was on the stage of a regular theatre.

"A little while ago I saw a novel experiment in the way of movie pictures. Just at one of the funniest climaxes in a good comedy the management had the operator stop his machine, the lights were flashed up, and there on the stage were the very actors who had made the picture continuing in person the action that was being shown on the screen. Surprise is one of the most essential elements of comedy, but it fell flat. Why? Because in the close up full faces that were being shown on the screen the audience could see clearly the subtle shades of facial expression that were getting the laugh, while on the stage in person their faces were merely a white blur to all but those in the front seats.

"Another advantage of the movies over the stage for comedy purposes is that the picture maker does not have to resort to artificial or mechanical tricks. To be funny a scene must be natural, the actor must seem relaxed and unconscious of his audience. If the movie director wants to show an absent minded butterfly hunter walking into a waterfall he shows a real waterfall with a real sylvan background. He doesn't have to use a

Silent Comedy Is the Most Difficult to "Get Over" and Burlesque Is Far From Easy, Since Its Fun Must Be Founded Upon Fact

painted drop and a stream of water that flows evenly from a pipe. He uses no props, no matter how many different scenes he may want to show in a single comedy."

Mr. Sennett believes enthusiastically in the movies. "There must be something wonderful," he says, "about the business that can develop in half a generation into the third largest industry in the country." And this man who has a genius for packing five laughs into a situation where only one laugh grew before feels that making people happy, besides being a lucrative occupation, is a serious mission.

"We keep our fingers on the pulse of the world," he told the writer soberly. "Only the other day I received a report from one of my agents in Paris. He wrote me that when the wounded soldiers come back the first thing they ask is 'Where can we get a laugh; where can we see a funny play; where can we see a funny moving picture?' I myself have received letters from towns behind the battle lines of Europe, expressing gratitude for a laugh of which I was the father, and I tell you they have made my heart expand.

"People sometimes ask me what screen comedians are like outside the studio, whether there's any truth in the myth that those whose business it is to make others laugh are usually gloomy individuals themselves. As far as I've observed, film comedians are like other people, only perhaps the large salaries they receive make it easy for them to laugh in and out of the studio."

And with a triply hearty laugh the director-scenario-writer-actor Mack Sennett bounded out of his chair to plunge energetically into the rehearsal of a scene that will soon make millions laugh.

OLD MAN GREENLAW FINDS MORAL IN JERRY HOPPENDIKE'S CASE

He Relates to a Hard Bitted Arkansas City Audience How Jerry Struggled Along, Playing Poker With a Heavy Handicap, Till Fate Took a Hand in the Game

By DAVID A. CURTIS.

"MOST gen'ly th' ain't never no tellin' how things is gwine to break into a poker game—not 'thouten a man has the deal his own self, th' ain't," said old man Greenlaw as if speaking to the world at large. "Even then," he continued with the air of one delivering an original thought of great value and profound wisdom, "even then they is al'ays liable fo' to be somethin' interfere with the degrees o' Providence an' the hull plan o' the game 'll go galley west an' hellwards 'nstead o' bein' a benefit to the man what 'd ought fo' to git the pot."

It was evident from his manner as he looked around at his audience in the little saloon he owned and conducted on the levee in Arkansas City that he considered himself a benefactor to the human race by reason of his having evolved and enunciated so precious a thought as he had just expressed, but it was also evident from the manner of those who heard him that they by no means agreed with him as to the importance of his remarks. On the contrary, they continued eating or burning their tobacco, each according to his individual preference, with placid unconcern, precisely as if he had not spoken.

Observing this, he produced a cigar from his vest pocket and bit it in two. After eating one of the pieces he lighted the other and began smoking, as if washing his hands of all further responsibility. He evidently felt that if his friends refused to be impressed it was no concern of his.

Ordinarily he could not have pleased them better, but Arkansas City had been more than usually stagnant for some time past and they felt that even his conversation was more endurable than the monotony of silence further continued. Jake Winterbottom therefore spoke up.

"I's done seen somepin' o' that kyind frequent my own self," he said, "but what the hell? 'Pears like th' ain't nothin' c'n be did. If it's thataway it's thataway, an' that's all they is to it. Thing to do is to play fo' a other pot."

"That d'pends," said the old man eagerly. "They is times when they c'n be a heap did, but 'tain't everybody c'n do it. Jerry Hoppendike was a man what c'd do blame nigh 's much 's any five men in Tuscaloosa, but I seen him onc't when th' overrulin' hand o' fate stepped in an' trompled him in the mud o' disaster, kickin' his innards outen him most vicious, an' blowin' him up final into a monstrous c'lamity what drowned nigh a hundred mo' at the same time.

"They couldn't be nobody 'xpected to do much under them circumstants, but he done what he could. Th' ain't nobody c'n do no mo'n that."

"What happened him?" asked Sam Pearsall. It was certainly very dull in Arkansas City when Sam Pearsall would ask for a story.

"A heap," said the old man. "First off he done stole a hoss. Th' ain't no denyin' what he was onruly, but they wa'n't nobody what knowed him never b'lieved what he'd a did nothin' like that, on'y fo' him bein' drunk when he done it. He was hellish enough any time, but he knowed what the pop'lar prejudice was c'ncernin' a hoss, an' he wouldn't 'a' did that.

"They was better men 's him in Tuscaloosa, an' they was wuss 'n him, but not a helluva lot wuss. He'd pay his debts ruther 'n to go to jail, an' he hadn't never been knowed to steal afo', but a'ter he done took the first wrong step 'peared like he done cast off all restraint.

"Hit was a tol'able long step he took, too, bein' a high steppin' pacer o' Squire Kipp's an' valyable fo' racin' pupposes what he rid plumb over the border into Mississippi afo' they knowed he went."

"Must 'a' been a onusual kyind o' hoss," observed Jim Blaisdell with considerable interest. "I done had quite a few hosses my own self when I was some younger 'n I be now, an' some on 'em was pacers, but they wa'n't none on 'em remarkable high steppers, nor I hain't never seen no pacer what was. He mought 'a' been some fast at that, but I wouldn't c'nsider him much good fo' a saddle hoss, not if he was a high stepper. 'Pears like high steppin' an' pacin' don't go together good."

"Mebbe not as a gen'l thing," admitted the old man as if preferring to shirk an argument, "but Squire Kipp reckoned that was what made him p'tic'ly valyable, bein' 's different 's he was f'm other hosses.

"Anyways, that ain't the p'int," he went on hurriedly, noticing that Blaisdell was disposed to enter into a discussion. "P'int is what Jerry Hoppendike done stole him, takin' a desprit plunge onto the downward path fr'm rectitude an' Tuscaloosa, an' not never lookin' back till he got outen the State. Showed his good jedgment takin' 's fast a hoss 's he took, fo' it wouldn't a been good fo' him if them that was follerin' 'd a come up with him."

"What yo' all done said afo' was what he done got outen the State afo' they knowed he'd went," remarked Joe Bassett with the air of one who loathes discrepancy. And the old man showed signs of temper.

"They knowed the hoss was gone, didn't they?" he snapped out. "Just nachully they was a party follered immejit. They hadn't been no opportunity fo' no lynchin' fo' a long time, an' they was c'nsid'able 'nthusia'm d'splayed, but that ain't to say what they knowed it was Jerry Hoppendike stole him.

"They'd a been mo' if they 'd a knowed that, fo' they'd been c'nsid'able hard feelin's 'cumilatin' among his creditors, an' they was some on 'em 'd a paid fo' a rope cheerful fo' the satisfaction o' pullin' of it with him tied to one end. But no.

"All's they knowed first off was what they'd been a hoss stole, an' them what went was actin' on gen'l principles, 'thouten the pussnal animum what they'd a had if they'd a knowed who 'twas.

"Havin' 'xplained that," he continued, glaring at Bassett, "mebbe I c'n be p'mitted fo' to p'ceed 'thouten bein' quibbled at no mo'. They's c'nsid'able 'nstruction to be tooken f'm hearin' 'bout Jerry Hoppendike's down'ard c'reer, an' Gawd knows yo' uns needs 'nstruction bad."

"I reckon we 's gwine to git it bad," muttered Jake Winterbottom with a grim smile, but the old man did not hear him, and the others looked too discouraged to interfere, so the story went on.

"The Good Book says," continued the old man, "what they is some good into the wust of us an' some bad into the best of us, an' Jerry Hoppendike wa'n't no 'xception. Must 'a' been a kyind of a yearnin' into him fo' to be decent 'n spite o' havin' went 's wayward 's he had on the hoss, fo' the next was heer'd of him he done sold the hoss, an' set in to earn a honest livin' at poker.

"Don't do to jedge nobody too ha'sh. He mought 'a' turned out all right a'ter all, on'y fo' the hand o' fate steppin' in like I said.

"They was the makin's of a player into him, an' he mought 'a' did well if he'd 'a' had mo' moral character, but they must 'a' been some fatal weakness in his makeup. 'Peared like he didn't had no self-reliance.

"If a man put up any kyind of a bluff at him, mo' special if they was a s'gestion o' vi'lence 'tached to it, he'd lay down even if he helt the best hand. An' he was most gen'ly cotched if he tried stackin' the cyards. 'Peared like he didn't had s'fficient dexterity into his fingers, an' just nachully he done got shot up pretty bad sev'ral times, not bein' 's quick with his gun 's he'd oughter been.

"O' co'se, things like that was a big handicap to him, an' they was a heap o' credit had to be gave to him fo' strugglin' along like he done fo' years afo' he done got to be 'ntitled to any kyind o' respect as a expert. 'Pears like he had a fo'givin' disposition, too, an' that was helt ag'in him. 'Cordin' to the idees o' the p'fession he'd ought fo' to went gunnin' fo 'the man what shot him up, soon 's he'd got out o' hospital, but he never done it.

"He useter say, 'What's the good? Bygones is bygones. I'd ruther git a man's wad than his life. 'Pears like I c'n git mo' good outen it.' An' he'd set in an' play with him ag'in.

"Most gen'ly he done lose when he played, owin' to them shortcomin's o' hisn, but he kep' right on a playin', havin' sot his mind on makin' a honest livin', like I said, an' bein' 's perseverin' as he sho' was. He sho' d'served success if anybody did, an' he come nigh gittin' of it too. Got so he was one o' the leadin' experts on the boats afo' he was run over final by the hand o' Fate, like I likewise said."

"Must a got a good price fo' that hoss," observed Pearsall, as one who had doubts, "seein' he gen'ly lose an' kep' on into the game fo' years. Mebbe they was playin' penny ante. 'Pears like he'd a lose his hull wad if 'twas a reel game."

"They was a number o' times when he done went broke," said the old man with lofty calm, "an' it was them times what showed the moral grandeur they was into him spite of his weaknesses. Th' ain't many but what 'd a been d'scouraged losin' their wads 's frequent 's he done, but 'peared like he didn't never git d'scouraged. He'd disappear fo' a time, an' they wouldn't nobody hear nothin' about him fo' a spell, but he'd al'ays come back with a other wad an' set in again. 'Peared like he done reelized what playin' poker was the on'y chanst he had fo' to git rich an' respectable.

"Gen'ly they'd be stories goin' 'round them times 'bout hosses bein' stole in various parts, an' they was some what was oncharitable enough fo' to say what they s'picioned what Jerry done stoled 'em. 'Peared like they done cherished the mem'ry o' that youthful indiscretion o' hisn. Onct a hoss thief al'ays a hoss thief, was what they done said, an' onct or twict when they was niggers missin' they said what mo'n likely Jerry Hoppendike done stole them too. Th' ain't nothin' mean enough to say 'bout a man a'ter he's done made one mistake.

"But they wa'n't never no proof o' his bein' discriminated, an' 's fast 's he'd git a new wad he'd resume his effo't to r'deem hisself. I useter think it was almost p'thetic the way he done struggled along, 'thouten a sympathizin' hand bein' stretched out in his d'rection. They sho' was a heap o' good into him.

"Anyways he done all he could, an' they can't nobody do no mo' 'n that, but as the Good Book says, the ironing o' fate is 'xceedin' crool, an' 'pears like the hand o' fate sho' had it in fo' Jerry Hoppendike. All it was waitin' fo' was the proper time fo' to step in.

"That p'tic'lar moment done arrove just when Jerry Hoppendike was rakin' in the biggest pot what he ever win. They was enough into it fo' to buy him a plantation an' 'nable him to live retired. Come at the climate o' his c'reer. Things does happen funny.

"Way on it was this. They was a game on the River Belle one night when two o' the leadin' experts on the river had three suckers an' Jerry Hoppendike settin' in with 'em. The experts knowed what Jerry was a p'fessional all right, but they reckoned what they c'd take his wad [illegible] what the suckers c'd be p'suaded to put up, bein' 's the two on 'em was in cahoots, an' Jerry was playin' a lone hand. It looked reas'nable, [illegible]

"They hadn't nobody gave Jerry credit fo' havin' nerve enough to stack the cyards no mo', him havin' been shot up 's often 's he had fo' tryin' of it. O' co'se they done watched him keerful when he doled the cyards, but what they didn't know was what he'd done been practisin' by hisself till he done got to be nigh 'bout the slickest dealer what they was on the [illegible] river. An' they wa'n't never no question rose later on, but what [illegible] had his nerve with him that [illegible]

"He didn't try nothin' outen the way till the hull party got well het up over the game, but when they was bettin' stacks o' blues an' layin' thousand dollar bills in the pot 'long with the chips 'peared like he done roused hisself fo' a s'preme effo't, an' when the deal come round to him he give out six 'xtraordinary good hands. Any one of 'em was enough fo' to git a man 'xcited, but the way it come out in the show down Jerry done had the winnin' hand his own self.

"An' he done got away with it. 'Peared like nobody s'picioned him till 'twas too late.

"Some o' them what swam ashore later on said what they was a heavenly smile on Jerry Hoppendike's face when he gathered in that pot. The just reward o' them many years o' patient 'ndeavors to reform was in his fist, an' reelizin' that they wouldn't be no mo' 'casion fo' him to risk his neck stealin' hosses, it's mo' 'n likely what he was filled with measureless satisfaction, as the Good Book says.

"Then the b'iler bust."

SINGERS IN THE WOODS

THE tiny steamboat Evelyn, which has a monopoly of passenger and freight traffic on Schroon Lake in the Adirondacks, passed a motor boat going in the same direction as she was making her last daily trip from the village of Schroon to Pottersville not long ago. Capt. Sanders, who has plied Schroon waters thirty-eight years, tooted a merry "howdy" on the whistle and a man who was crouching over the gasolene engine arose in such a hurry that he rocked the boat.

His face fairly beamed as he waved his arms windmill fashion at the Evelyn's skipper. The captain leaned out of his wheelhouse, gravely saluted in return and then, turning to a SUN man standing near him, asked:

"Do you know that feller in the boat? No? Well, that's Goritz, the Metropolitan opery singer. He's the greatest in the world, they tell me, and he's one of the best friends I've got. I bet he'd do anything on earth for me, although there ain't no reason for it at all.

"You see, it was like this. One day when the Evelyn was comin' down the lake I saw out yonder a big motor boat stuck hard and fast on a rock. Yep, there she was as tight as you please with a lot of people aboard—I guess there was 'most twenty—and every one of them believin' they was goin' to stay just where they was all night.

"I steered the Evelyn over, threw out a rope, hooked fast and towed all hands across the lake to their camp. The boat belonged to Goritz and all them folks was his guests.

"Well, sir, I didn't do any more for him than I'd 'a' done for you or anybody else in the same predicament, but he seemed to think it was something wonderful and never quit thanking me for it. Now every time we pass each other on the lake he just gets up, yells out friendlylike and waves his hands.

"They tell me Goritz—his first name is Otto, but nobody calls him that—gets as high as $1,000 to $3,000 a night just for singin' a few tunes, an' believe me that's some pay!

"His camp is on the edge of the lake in them woods over there and my place is near his'n. He has a lot of opery singers with him, a regular houseful. They've been there all summer."

"Do you ever hear them sing?" asked THE SUN man.

"Well, sir, I should say I did," replied Capt. Sanders. "They've got a $1,000 piano that was sent up from New York early in the season for their practising and they're singin' all the time, but I don't mind it 'cept when I want to go to sleep and then I have to shet my winders."